

Background

In June, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board approved the SNC Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15 Action Plan (Plan). The Plan provides staff with guidance and focus on continued outreach activities to encourage key target audiences to support Sierra investment and sound policy; establish secure funding for project work in the Region; and support the SNC as a critical funding delivery mechanism for the Region and the State. Categories of activities identified in the Plan include:

1. Elevating the profile of the SNC as a resource for information regarding the link between upper watersheds, forest health, climate change, clean water, clean air, and sustainable communities;
2. Meeting with local/state/federal agencies, legislators and other decision-makers to ensure investment in the Region where more than 60 percent of the State's developed water supply originates;
3. Utilizing events, and new and traditional media to communicate the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to the rest of the State;
4. Tracking and analyzing current Sierra Nevada scientific research to inform the development of sound science-based policy that protects and restores the Sierra Nevada Region;
5. Partnering with allies to complete Regional tours that demonstrate the value of SNC Initiatives and the importance of investment in watershed and forest health projects; and,
6. Creating and distributing the FY 2013-14 Annual Report.

The Board also requested that the SNC, as its highest priority, develop a watershed by watershed analysis of the Region with the goal of adequately addressing issues related to forest health, fire, and water.

Current Status

In accordance with the priority set by the Board, staff developed a Draft Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Action Plan (SNFCI Plan) for Board consideration at this meeting. The SNFCI Plan describes current forest conditions and issues and, when complete, will identify projects and activities necessary within each watershed to address the issues. In conjunction with the development of the SNFCI Plan, an outreach and communications plan is being developed to ensure that key policy and decision-makers receive the information, understand the urgency of the situation and take action within the Region.

Based on Action Plan guidance, SNC staff continue to conduct outreach focused on increasing awareness of the Sierra Nevada Region's important role in in the State by engaging in activities to support the focus areas approved by the Board. Progress has been made in the following areas:

Meeting with local/state/federal agencies and other key decision-makers

Water Bond

On Wednesday, August 13th the Legislature and Governor approved a new \$7.5 billion water bond measure (AB 1471 – Rendon). This bond will replace the measure passed in 2009 and will go before voters in November. As a reminder, that bond contained \$75 million for the SNC out of a total of \$11.5 billion. At various stages of the legislative process the SNC's allocation ranged from \$0 to \$115 million. The final bond contains an allocation of \$25 million for the SNC.

Final conservancy/council allocations are as follows:

- Baldwin Hills - \$10 million
- Tahoe - \$15 million
- Coachella Valley - \$10 million
- Ocean Protection Council - \$30 million
- San Diego River - \$17 million
- San Gabriel/Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains - \$30 million
- San Joaquin River - \$10 million
- Santa Monica Mountains - \$30 million
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy - \$25 million
- Coastal - \$100 million
- Delta - \$50 million

Additionally, Wildlife Conservation Board will receive \$200 million to enhance stream flows and there is \$120 million available for urban stream projects. The Department of Fish and Wildlife will receive \$285 million for a wide range of watershed restoration projects, some of which could potentially be located in the Region. The new bond also includes language specifically calling out the remediation of mercury contamination from legacy mines.

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) funds for the hydrologic regions identified in the California Water Action Plan amount to \$510 million. The Mountain Counties Overlay, representing a significant portion of our Region will receive \$13 million. The final storage figure came to \$2.7 billion.

Cap and Trade Auction Revenue

SNC has engaged in ongoing discussions with key decision-makers in the allocation of cap and trade auction revenue, including California Air Resources Board (CARB) Chair Mary Nichols and leadership at CalFire. To date, the SNC has been unsuccessful in receiving an allocation of Cap and Trade funds for the 2014-15 or 2015-16 fiscal years. However, we continue to make the case for the expansive opportunities to address and mitigate climate change through effective restoration of our forested landscapes and the utilization of biomass as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with large damaging wildfire.

The SNC is working with CalFire to determine ways that we may assist in the expenditure of the funds they have received from Cap and Trade. This includes exploring ways in which the utilization of biomass resulting from forest restoration efforts can be increased.

Utilizing events, and new and traditional media

SNC Story Maps

Staff utilized Board guidance and input from the June meeting, as well as training in new GIS technology, to update and finalize the SNC story maps making them more interactive and compelling. The maps were released in early August and are available on the SNC Web site.

Media

Staff have been working with producers at Capitol Public Radio to provide content for a wildfire series that, at the time of this writing, is scheduled to run the week of August 17th. This series will look at wildfires in California and whether they are being dealt with in the right way. The Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis was featured in the series.

Staff continue to post to the Sierra Wildfire Wire. Since the last Board meeting, blog posts have focused on resources at risk during the Shirley Fire in the Southern Sierra, and the role that forests play in buffering the effects of climate change. There are currently more than 60 subscribers representing the following categories: Sierra residents, forest industry professionals, water district managers, legislative staff, ranching and agricultural professionals, CalFire, Tribes, the U.S. Forest Service, land trusts, and the media. Staff will continue to look for ways to talk about the variety of long and short-term impacts of wildfires in the Sierra and will continue to expand the audience through the end of the 2014 fire season.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the creation of the SNC, staff reached out to partners and stakeholders soliciting feedback how we're doing and how the SNC has impacted the Region we serve. We are receiving stories, pictures, video, and audio clips of projects throughout the Region that demonstrate the impact of the SNC. Staff will utilize these stories and images in a social media campaign (Facebook and Twitter) that will run through the month of September.

At the time of this writing, staff is developing talking points to share with Boardmembers, partners and grantees for inclusion in Op Eds that highlight the value and contribution of the SNC in the Region in the 10 years of our existence. September 24th marks the 10 year anniversary of the signing of the legislation creating the SNC.

Great Sierra River Clean Up

The 6th annual Great Sierra River Cleanup (GSRC) will occur on Saturday, September 20th. Media efforts around the 2014 event will focus on:

- Connecting the Sierra and the Delta to build on the Resolution signed by the SNC and the Delta Conservancy at the Joint Board Meeting in March, 2014; and,
- Highlighting the importance of watersheds in the Sierra Nevada to urban water users.

We're expecting more than 60 groups to be involved on September 20th, with a number of multi-party cleanups planned. A new approach for us this year has included working with the Delta Conservancy to promote not just the GSRC, but also their same-day Delta Waterways Cleanup and the connections we share.

To date, Legislative outreach efforts for the event have yielded a total of fifteen legislative co-chairs, including:

Senators

- Ellen Corbett (D – East Bay)
- Ted Gaines (R – Rocklin)
- Jim Nielsen (R – Gerber)
- Fran Pavley (D – Agoura Hills)

Assembly Members

- Tom Ammiano (D – San Francisco)
- Rob Bonta (D – Oakland)
- Joan Buchanan (D – Alamo)
- Connie Conway (R – Tulare)
- Ken Cooley (D – Rancho Cordova)
- Beth Gaines (R – Roseville)
- Richard Gordon (D – Menlo Park)
- Richard Pan (D – Sacramento)
- Jim Patterson (R – Fresno)
- Henry Perea (D – Fresno)
- Susan Talamantes Eggman (D – Stockton)

As co-chairs, these representatives have agreed to assist with SNC outreach efforts by letting their constituents know about the event, and agreed to be listed as Cleanup supporters in SNC promotional materials.

SNC is actively using Facebook to help promote the Cleanup. Staff is utilizing this social media tool to connect with potential volunteers and cleanup coordinators by sharing photos of our beautiful Region, past cleanup efforts, publicizing efforts of our cleanup partners, and acknowledging our event sponsors.

As always, Boardmembers are encouraged to participate in the Great Sierra River Cleanup. Please let staff know if you would like to participate so that we can help you locate a cleanup site near you. GSRC T-shirts are also available for purchase at the Board meeting.

Partnering with allies to complete Regional tours:

In late July, the SNC partnered with the Forest Foundation and Sierra Pacific Industries on a legislative staff tour of the Rim Fire. The purpose of the tour was to expose legislative staff to the range of issues confronting private and public lands in the Rim Fire burn area. Legislative staff in attendance ranged from those working for urban legislators to key committee and caucus staff. The tour included stops at Sierra Pacific lands being harvested and reforested, U.S. Forest Service lands being restored and stabilized, and Yosemite National Park where the legislative staff delegation were able to view the benefits of prescribed fire in protecting key resources and facilities.

On August 8th we conducted a media tour of the Rim Fire in partnership with the California Forestry Association and the Sierra Foothill Conservancy. The focus of the tour was to provide reporters with a look at the Rim Fire one year later, and to discuss the urgency with which we need to address current forest health conditions in order to protect water, air, habitat, economic, and recreational resources. Reporters from Capital Public Radio, The Modesto Bee, and KQED attended and the tour resulted in an article in The Modesto Bee, web and radio coverage on KQED, and coverage in Capital Public Radio's wildfire series. Those articles are attached in the back of your packet

Creating and distributing the fiscal year 2013-14 Annual Report:

See Agenda Item VIII for a detailed update.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to develop and utilize traditional and social media, the SNC Web site, the Sierra Wildfire Wire, and current events to educate water users, policy and other decision-makers about the Region and its value and importance to the State.

Recommendation

This is an information item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.